



**The Department of Children and Families (DCF)
Domestic Abuse Program Application for Domestic Violence Housing First Pilot Program
Application #437003-G22-0001853
August 24, 2021**

The purpose of this document is to provide interested parties with information to enable them to prepare and submit an application for the Domestic Violence Housing First Pilot Program.

Background

Wisconsin has received \$2,049,484 in additional Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) funds to continue efforts to “prepare, prevent, and respond to COVID-19”. These funds are available in addition to the annual FVPSA formula grant, which partially funds the DCF Domestic Abuse Program.

Description of the Problem

It is estimated that more than 80% of survivors of domestic violence have made the choice to face homelessness for themselves and their children rather than stay in an unsafe, abusive relationship. Financial coercion is one of the most common tactics of power and control, and survivors often struggle to access stable income, transportation, childcare, or credit. Emergency shelters are temporary and often at capacity. Capacity limits have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Systematic oppressions at the intersections of race, gender, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration statute, and ableism, which have been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, perpetuate further barriers, and historically marginalized survivors experience disproportionate compounding harms with less access to economic and trauma-related resources.

According to the DCF Domestic Violence Grant Program October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020, Annual Report: 3,271 adults were sheltered at least one night, 20,682 adults requested shelter but that request went unfulfilled due to a shelter being full, 19,272 adults received victim advocacy services, and 16,409 survivors received legal advocacy services. According to the 2019 National Network to End Domestic Violence domestic violence counts national census, domestic violence agencies in Wisconsin reported that 91% of unmet client needs were related to safe housing.

Program Model Overview

DCF is utilizing the additional FVPSA funds to respond to COVID-19 needs by administering an evidence-based and trauma-informed Domestic Violence Housing First (DVHF) pilot program in Wisconsin. DVHF is a proven, evidence-based practice that moves domestic violence survivors into safe, stable permanent housing as quickly as possible. Once housed, survivors have access to supportive, holistic advocacy resources to rebuild their lives.

DVHF is guided by the belief that housing is a basic right and a necessity to be met prior to a person being able to attend to other life needs such as employment or substance use issues. As part of this model, domestic abuse advocacy agencies would have advocates employed to



help survivors locate safe and affordable housing. Agencies will not mandate participation in services either before obtaining housing or in order to retain housing. Four key components of a DVHF model include: a survivor-drive approach; trauma-informed and mobile services; flexible financial assistance; and multifaceted community engagement. Researchers have studied these components and described them below:

Survivor-driven, mobile advocacy: A critical component of the model is that advocates focus on addressing the needs identified by survivors rather than on predetermined needs promoted by agencies. Advocates are also mobile, meeting survivors where it is safe and convenient for them, and advocacy continues as long as survivors need support. Advocates are aware of the myriad ways that abusers sabotage survivors' economic and housing stability – even after the relationship has ended – and they mobilize multiple resources and community supports to prevent or counter these abusive activities. In addition to advocating for survivors in other aspects of their lives (e.g., employment, immigration, health, children's needs) and engaging in ongoing safety planning, advocates work proactively and creatively with survivors to obtain housing stability. This may involve helping a survivor safely retain [their] current housing or helping find new affordable housing. Advocates are proactive and creative, accompanying survivors to housing appointments, acting as liaisons with landlords, and negotiating leases.

Flexible engagement, including flexible funding: Many survivors need not only proactive advocacy to obtain safe and stable housing but also temporary financial assistance to get back on their feet. They may need assistance with issues viewed as directly related to housing: a security deposit and temporary rental assistance, help clearing up rent arrears... or help with utility bills. Often, though, survivors need funds that may not be viewed by others as impacting housing but that advocates recognize are critical to housing stability: for example, help repairing their cars so they do not lose their jobs, help expunging a prior conviction that is preventing them from obtaining government-funded housing, or help repairing bad credit.... Funds are targeted to support survivors so they can rebuild their lives, including covering childcare costs, transportation, school supplies, uniforms and permits required for employment, as well as time-limited and flexible rental assistance (Mbilinyi, 2015; Sullivan, Bomsta, & HacsKaylo, 2016).

The DVHF model promotes the idea of “flexible engagement,” tailoring financial and support assistance to the individual needs of each survivor. For some survivors, that may be a small amount of funding followed by a check-in to see if additional funds are needed. For others, however, a larger immediate investment may be necessary and sufficient to stabilize someone's housing, and for others, assistance will fluctuate with crises. This flexibility is a critical component of the DV Housing First model and is consistent with the philosophy of DV advocacy to provide individualized, survivor-centered services (Davies & Lyon, 2014; Goodman & Epstein, 2008).



Trauma-informed practice: Given the traumatic nature of DV, as well as the likelihood that DV survivors have also experienced other lifetime traumas such as child abuse and sexual abuse (Campbell, Greeson, Bybee, & Raja, 2008), a critical tenet of DV Housing First is to engage in trauma-informed practice. These practices include (1) establishing emotional safety, (2) restoring choice and control, (3) facilitating survivors' connections to community supports, (4) supporting coping, (5) responding to identity and context, and (6) building strengths (Anderson, 2009; Goodman, Sullivan, et al., 2016; Harris & Fallo, 2001). Understanding and appropriately responding to trauma reactions is especially important when helping survivors obtain and sustain housing, as sometimes these responses manifest after initial stability is attained (Ferencik & Ramirez-Hammond, 2013; Horesh, Solomon, Zerach, & Ein-Dor, 2011). Sometimes, trauma reactions such as depression, immobility, or PTSD are suppressed while a survivor is intently focused on the task of securing housing for themselves and their children. Once that housing is obtained, however, and an initial calm is established, the survivor is "safe" to experience the overwhelming feelings related to their trauma. Without a knowledgeable and supportive advocate available to them to help them through this crisis, the housing that the survivor has worked so hard to secure can be jeopardized.

Community engagement: Advocates also proactively engage those people in the community who can help support the safety, stability, and well-being of survivors. This includes engaging with health-care professionals, law enforcement and the legal systems, educators and school administrators, religious and spiritual leaders, and others. With specific regard to obtaining housing, advocates forge mutually beneficial relationships with landlords, city officials, and housing councils to obtain vouchers or rental agreements on behalf of DV survivors. Through these relationships, advocates not only obtain housing for individual survivors, but they change and improve the way communities respond to DV overall.

Cris M. Sullivan & Linda Olsen (2016) Common ground, complementary approaches: adapting the Housing First model for domestic violence survivors, Housing and Society, 43:3, 182-194, DOI: 10.1080/08882746.2017.1323305

Eligibility

All current DCF-funded domestic abuse programs, including tribal programs receiving Family Services funds, are eligible to apply.

Distribution Process

Funds will be distributed via a competitive application process. Interested parties must complete the application and email it to DCFDSPPDomesticAbuse@wisconsin.gov. At least three (3) sites will be awarded up to \$200,000 per calendar year (beginning in 2022) for three (3) years to develop and implement a DVHF Pilot Program. There will be four optional one (1) year renewals at the end of the initial contract period.



A separate application process is being released to establish a training and technical assistance provider to support the Pilot Program and sites involved. Additionally, a DCF contracted provider will be working with participating sites to engage in a formal evaluation and cost analysis. The evaluation will be used to demonstrate successful outcomes to internal and external stakeholders.

All applications will be reviewed by an application review committee who, in DCF's judgement, possess specific knowledge and skills essential to this competitive application. The application committee will review and score the applications. The score given by each evaluator shall be summed and divided by the number of evaluators to compute an average technical score for each application. Applications will be ranked based on the numerical scores received.

Contract award(s) will be granted to the highest scoring applications. If additional state or federal funds become available for these services, DCF may utilize the results of this application process to amend the contract(s) and/or award a contract(s) to the highest scoring application(s) not originally funded.

Allowable Uses of Funds

Appendix A

Matching Funds

There is no requirement for matching funds.

Contracts

Awarded programs will be issued a contract. The contract period will be December 1, 2021 – December 31, 2024. If additional funds become available, contract renewals may be provided past that date.

Application

A sample application is attached. Submit the application to DCFDSPDomesticAbuse@wisconsin.gov by October 5, 2021, 11:59 p.m.

Awarded programs will be notified of the status of their application by October 15, 2021.

Evaluation and Cost Analysis

Awarded programs will be required to participate in a formal evaluation and cost analysis conducted by an agency chosen by DCF.

Program Reporting

Awarded programs will be required to submit an annual performance progress report. The format and due date will be provided at a later date.

Informational Conference

An optional Informational Conference will be held on August 30, 2021, from 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. There is no option to attend in person. All applicants who intend to respond to this



application are encouraged to listen to the conference. This conference will not be recorded and there will be no formal minutes recorded.

Conference Access:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://dcfwi.zoom.us/j/84854726151?pwd=OW1jN0Foc2tCRDN0T1pTVjNjNHluQT09>

Meeting ID: 848 5472 6151

Passcode: 959985

One tap mobile

+14702509358,,84854726151#,,,,*959985# US (Atlanta)

+14703812552,,84854726151#,,,,*959985# US (Atlanta)

Questions?

Please contact DCFDSPPDomesticAbuse@wisconsin.gov with any questions.



Appendix A

Allowable Uses of Funds

FVPSA guidance states that funds can be used to support the operation and administration of shelter and supportive services, including, but not limited to:

- Staffing;
- Shelter utilities;
- Food and toiletries for shelter;
- Rental costs of the shelter facility;
- Supplies for the shelter, including supplies for survivors entering shelter such as clothing, toiletries, etc.;
- Transportation;
- Developing safety plans;
- Individual and group counseling and peer support groups;
- Provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate services;
- Services for children exposed to domestic violence;
- Advocacy, case management, and information and referral services;
- Direct crisis intervention services, including counseling, mobile advocacy, telehealth, peer support, and in-person assistance;
- Supplies, equipment, and software to assist in carrying out remote services;
- Outreach to underserved populations to increase access to domestic violence services and reduce the exposure and risk of COVID-19, and;
- Training, technical assistance, prevention, and outreach to increase awareness of domestic and dating violence.

Please note that FVPSA has a broad definition of shelter that includes:

- Emergency and immediate shelter;
- Rental subsidies;
- Temporary refuge or lodging in individual units such as an apartment (not required to be owned, operated or leased by the program);
- Hotel or motel vouchers.

The following are **ineligible** costs:

- Direct payment to survivors;*
- Construction costs;
- Renovation costs;
- Sole purchase or lease of automobiles.

*Payments to a landlord or a vendor (e.g., for nominal relocation costs, etc.) *on behalf of a survivor* are allowable.

FVPSA funds must be used to supplement and not supplant other, federal, state, and local public funds in accordance with 42 U.S.C. § 10406(c)(6).